

Cabel Marsh First Settled in Area Which Became Belleville

Early Enterprizes Started up With Arrival of James Bell

The first settler, on the land to one day be known as Belleville, was Cabel Marsh. He erected the first cabin on the south shore of the Huron River. No town existed at that time but with the coming of James A. H. Bell, a few businesses sprang up with the semblance of a pioneer town. He built a dam here and also the first grist mill. His brother, William, kept the first store. The first post office was established in 1845 with William Bell as the first postmaster. Just one mail per week was received for some time.

In 1846 James Bell sold out to George D. Hill and moved to Toledo. The original plat of the village of Belleville contained 86 lots and was filed by George D. Hill, Daniel L. Quirk and Robert P. Clarke. The plat was filed for record on June 27, 1848.

Growth Rapid

In 1860 the population was 250. At that time the town contained a post office and general store run by John Boice; five blacksmith shops, one druggist, three notary publics, three general stores, one flour mill, a saw mill, four boot and shoe stores, two brick and stone masons, two physicians—general practitioners, of course; three carpenters, one gunsmith, two wagon-makers, minister, butcher, grocer, cabinet maker, tailor, and Myrtle Lodge No. 89 F. & A. M.

The nearest shipping point was at Denton, four and one-half miles northwest of Belleville on the Michigan Central Railroad.

Three years later, in 1863 the population had increased to 300. Two hotels had been built and three mails were being delivered weekly. David Carr was then postmaster and the town had increased its business by a harness maker, insurance agent and one more minister.

In 1875, 12 years later, the population was still 300. A mill for the manufacture of lumber, staves and headings gave employment to a number of men and it was rumored that the proposed "Ypsilanti and Trenton railroad" would pass through Belleville. New additions to the town at that time were three taverns, a potash manufacturer, a custom house officer, a barber, cooper, dressmaker, three hardware stores, a tin smith, milliner, cider mill, and a furniture store and funeral parlor combined.

One of the hotels, located at the present "Five Points" had about 12 rooms, a bar and a parlor. It was later destroyed by fire. It never became popular because it was too far from the business center. It became a boarding house



MISS MARGARET HOPE has the distinction of having lived in the same house in Belleville longer than any other resident. It is located at 374 Main St. and she has occupied it for 74 years.

and housed mostly railroad workers.

Stages Run Daily

In 1881 the town had increased by 20 with a population of 320. The postmaster was then Robert Campbell and new additions to Belleville were a lawyer and the establishment of "The Belleville Enterprise" in 1886 by Roscoe Begole. It was a weekly paper later sold to A. E. Smith.

Daily stages to Martinsville, West Sumpter, Rawsonville and Ypsilanti were run in 1901. Helen C. Call assumed duties as postmistress and Bank of Belleville opened with James R. Clark as president. The first automobile passed through Belleville in that year on its way to Ypsilanti. In August of that same year, August Hoffman, Ypsilanti, drove a horse-drawn oil wagon belonging to Standard Oil Company into town. The Methodist Church was built then on land donated by James R. Clark.

Incorporated as Village

May, 1905, saw Belleville incorporated as a village. The village boundaries then took in about 250 acres. The first members of the village council were Dr. H. I. Post, Richard Cady, William Day, J. G. Coomer, W. A. Wallace, Charles Dickson, F. H. Clark, Will

Atyeo, president; Charles Ford, clerk; and Malcolm Soot, treasurer.

Population in 1910 was 486 and in 1920 was 626. The Detroit City Gas Company brought service to Belleville in 1927. In December of that year the village council abolished the office of constable and in its stead created a police department with Fred Miller as chief of police and Charles Leonard as police officer.

Street signs came into being in 1929 and a year later the council developed a plan for house numbering. Five Points was used as a base, and lots were numbered each way, at the rate of 100 numbers per block.

In 1930 the population had increased to 758.

School in Woodshed

The first school in Belleville was held in a woodshed on the site known as Belleville Pointe. A frame schoolhouse was built in 1839 on the site now occupied by the Methodist Church. It was moved twice and a brick school was built in 1867 and was used until 1903 when it was struck by lightning and destroyed.

The present school was built in 1926 and consisted of six teachers in the elementary division and four teaching high school. Fred Fischer was principal at that time and Miss Ellen Gould is the only person from that original group in service at Belleville School serving as elementary principal. The consolidation of seven schools followed shortly afterwards. The districts taken in were Mud St. (the Martinsville area), Otisville, Buckhorn (the Ecorse and Belleville Rd. territories), French Landing (across from the Edison dam), Denton, Willow Run, and Tyler St.

After the vote on consolidation had been passed it took five years to get the bond issue through, so students remained in the small schools under a consolidation directorship. There were 300 pupils in the new school. It was built on land formerly known as the Walters farm. Busses came into use after the schools had combined. When the Elwell district asked to be taken into the Belleville School plan, it was annexed by vote.

Great strides were made in developing the school—a large elementary division was added, a gymnasium, and in more recent years lighted football and softball fields, large recreational grounds, a new, modern addition to the high school with a beautiful cafeteria.

But tragedy again struck. Fire in 1952 destroyed virtually half of the old wing which contained the gymnasium, auditorium and 25 classrooms. The loss was estimated at \$700,000. The school had an enrollment of 2,500 at the time of the fire.

With the great increase in Belleville's population the city saw need for more schools. A new elementary school is planned for Quirk Rd.

Another new school is Belleville's first Parochial school, a beautiful brick building built by parishoners of St. Anthony's Catholic Church. A new temporary, gymnasium-type church is also in progress. These new buildings stand on the property formerly known as the Walters' farm.

Farm Becomes Park

The present Victory Park at Five Points was formerly an old farm owned by the Burt family. A

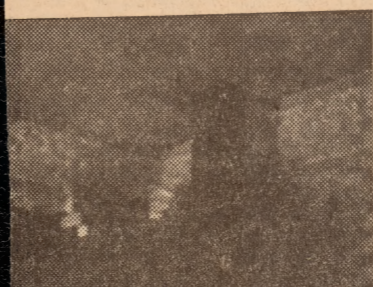
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BELLEVILLE MEANS The City Beautiful and this view emphasizes the fitness of the name. Main section is built on a peninsula. Edison

Dam creates a lovely lake from waters of the Huron River and there are year 'round sports for the fortunately situated residents.

Was Home Ever Like This ?



Fine Schools in Belleville



IT WAS WITH DISMAY that residents of Belleville viewed what was left of their fine school after a dis-

astrous fire in 1952 left it a mere shell. The fire occurred during a cold, icy night in January.



NOW, HOWEVER, they have a fine new addition which provides the latest in housing and equipment

for the students privileged to attend there. Sufficient room for parking helps the traffic situation.



CATHOLIC CHILDREN of Belleville and its environs are welcomed to this fine new school building

constructed by St. Anthony's Parish. Children are taught through the eighth grade in this building.

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group of businessmen banded together and donated funds for the purpose of buying the property for a city park. But because of neglect and with no one to care for the grounds it was signed over to Wayne County Road Commission.

The first motion picture house in Belleville was in the Methodist Church. From there it was moved to Main St. on the spot now known as Kirk's Drug Store. The latest theater, and a direct contrast to the old, one-aisle building, was moved down Main St. away from the business district around 1940.

Two hotels stood in downtown Belleville in yesteryears. One was located where Belleville Cleaners now stand and the other occupied the spot now owned by Cullin's Standard Oil Station. Behind that one was a livery stable where people could rent a horse for a few hours or a few days—something similar to the present day "rent-a-car" system.

Belleville's first creamery graced the shores of the Huron River on the spot where Doane's Boat Liv-
ery now stands. Before the creamery came into use it was a cider mill.

The town's first grist mill was built just west of the present day Hayward's Store and two others were located in what is now the bottom of the lake.

In the days of yore there were no fire houses, fancy engines or uniformed firemen. Whenever there was a fire in town the residents rang all the church bells and everyone would come a-runnin'.

The only way to travel to Detroit in the old days was via the railroad. There was one commuter train per day arriving in Belleville at 7 a.m. and returning at 4 p.m. The popular "hacks" in those days were horse-drawn surreys with fringe on top.

Garbage Plant Unpleasant

Speaking of trains—they had to do with one of Belleville's most unpleasant memories. When the old French Landing Reduction Plant was in operation, trains carrying garbage had to pass through Belleville from Detroit. And if the wind happened to be in just the wrong direction (which it most always was) the little town had to hold its breath till the trains passed. The garbage was made into fertilizer at the factory and oil extracts were sent to a soap company.

Edison built the dam on Huron River Drive and Haggerty Rd. around 1926, located across from the garbage works. This provided beautiful lake facilities.

Belleville had its first paved

street, Main St., in 1917. Widening operations took place in 1926 and Columbia Ave. also had a face-lifting at that time.

Well Known Residents

Under the administration of Orlo G. Roberts, village president, and the present mayor, Belleville became a city on May 14, 1946.

The Belleville resident who has lived in the same home for the longest number of years is Margaret Hope who has occupied the house at 374 Main St. for the past 74 years. Some of the oldest living residents are Emma Clark, 91; Myra Ruthruff, 89; Celia Carpenter, 87; and Jessie Riggs, 89. Some of the Belleville families who are direct descendants of original settlers are the Rents, Riggs, Clarks, Savages, Rob-

berts, Quirks, Codys, Soops and Richardsons.

Belleville High School's oldest living alumnae is Mrs. Nattie Wager of Columbia Ave., and its most illustrious graduate was Frank Cody, who before his death was superintendent of Detroit Schools for 25 years.



Costuming For Average Purse Style News of Half Century

Fashion-wise we've had an interesting go of it indeed! In 1904 England was our style guide . . . with the (Lord) Chesterfield and Prince Albert coats and London "Bobby" hats on our own policemen and English shirtwaist silhouettes adopted by our ladies . . . we were most "terribly" English.

After World War I Paris began to take over . . . And our skirts have been bobbing up and down and in and out in amusing mimicry ever since.

Even though a certain liberation by American designers won a

foothold during World War II . . . It seems doubtful that the pseudo sophisticates editing "Vogue and Harpers will let us be just normal, becomingly dressed Americans without a stiff battle. (Those trips to Europe for the Paris, London and Rome showings are pretty dandy, you know.)

Until the American woman gains enough poise and self-confidence to dress only in what suits her figure and coloring . . . Dior and his ilk will be aided and abetted by self-styled arbiters in his diabolical scheme for making us deserving and miserable objects of men's unsubtle derision of the topic of our fashion folly.

But American industry and designers are providing us every opportunity for being beautifully garbed, if we've the sense to accept.

When the Press was a baby, we had more dry-goods stores for home sewers than dress shops. Only a handful of the nation's women were able to be "elegantly" dressed by the French and English couturiere . . . emerging with gowns elaborately embellished around the one style of the day in colors and materials for which the average woman could only pine.

How remarkably different it is today!

The change is four-fold . . . 1) color . . . 2) color coordination throughout the industry providing blending accessories for deft costuming . . . 3) variety of fashion (slim skirts, wide skirts, fitted blouse, loose blouse . . . in lieu of past dictums of bouffant skirt only or bustle only or shirt waist and slim long skirt only as in the past . . .) and . . . 4) fashion on a budget, courtesy of our marvelous free enterprise system.

Today a working lassie shopping in the progressive dress salons of Ypsilanti garbs herself as fashionably and oftentimes more becomingly, than the richest dowager shopping the style centers of the world. It's truly one of the marvels of our age and, like so many fairy-like things in our lives, we probably don't half appreciate it.

Color variety crept into our popular fashion picture with the advent of World War I and the end of the German dye monopoly . . . when American chemists enabled us to make dyes at home.

Coordination of color, (allowing real costuming instead of just brown, black, blue or white shoes, purse and gloves to go with our dresses . . .) really started with the first coordinated color card put out by a Mrs. Rourke in about 1928.

It wasn't until after World War II that color coordination in the fashion industry really brought us matched accessories in abundance. Variety of costuming too is an innovation younger than the second World War.

It has been only in the last five to eight years that progressive dress manufacturers have been encouraging us to buy what's becoming and making it possible for us to make a suitable selection by providing a variety of fashion silhouettes.

Same Birth Year For Daily Press, Club Federation

By an act of Congress approved March 3, 1901 the General Federation of Women's Clubs was granted a charter .. with the approving signature, among others, of William McKinley, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

That Charter was officially signed by John Hay, Secretary of State on "the 12th day of December, A. D., 1904" . . . and the General "Fed" was off to a jubilant start.

We note with interest in this old document the venerable name of Mrs. Emma A. Fox, Detroit, Michigan, appearing as one of the charter members.

One Stride of Era Global News Pix

Among many things we have today that appear to have been non-existent in 1904 are photographic news photo services and interior decorating on any kind of a popular basis.

Seeking pictures of homes in 1904 this reporter was jostled from office to office among the news services until one finally despaired and admitted only private photographers would have such pix.

Our women's page photos are from Brown Brothers an office founded by an enterprising adventurer who was one of a handful of wanderers with camera in hand who furnished publications usually long after the actual event with their only pictorial news of the outer world.

Since then papers like the Ypsilanti Daily Press have purchased the services of world wide networks of news photography that bring our readers daily news views of happenings in the furthest corners of the globe.



The Louisiana Purchase was commemorated in the exposition in St. Louis Missouri.